LIGHT INFANTRY COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT

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Rotations through the National Training Center (NTC) over the years have had a beneficial effect on combat service support (CSS) in mechanized infantry units. Rotations through the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) are now having much the same effect on CSS operations in light infantry units. The lessons learned at the NTC have provided a common ground for both mechanized and light infantry units, and they offer many useful lessons for leaders at all levels.

On the basis of experience gained from numerous NTC rotations, other mechanized infantry assignments, and service in a light infantry division, we would like to share some observations and thoughts relevant to light infantry units. Our comments will focus only on the assets that are organic to a light infantry battalion.

Light infantry leaders should begin to standardize CSS operations and improve their units' ability to sustain themselves. To conduct sustained combat operations with the few vehicles they have, light units must place a high priority on CSS planning and execution.

The Support Platoon

The key to effective CSS in a light infantry battalion lies in the task organization of the support platoon. In terms of command and control, the support platoon should have a platoon leader, a platoon sergeant, an ammunition sergeant, and two truckmasters. Finding two extra NCOs, beyond the number authorized by the battalion modified tables of organization and equipment (MTOE), should not be a problem. Most light units can find a couple of good NCOs on training related profiles who can do the job. This is a short-term fix, however, and an MTOE change would be necessary for a long-term solution.

These leaders should be used as follows:

- The platoon leader is located in the field trains, where he is responsible for the organization and timely dispatch of logistical packages (LOGPACs).
- The platoon sergeant is located in the combat trains and is responsible for the security of the combat trains, vehicle movement from the combat trains forward, pickup zone (PZ) operations in support of the battalion aid station, and aerial resupply missions. As the NCO in charge of the combat trains, he is also the operations sergeant. Along with the S-4 and the S-1, he is responsible for the supervision of the administration and logistical (A&L) radio net and the accurate monitoring of the battalion command net.
- The ammunition NCO operates from the field trains and coordinates for the proper loading of ammunition into the LOGPACs.
- One of the truckmasters is in the combat trains and the other in the field trains. These soldiers are responsible for the vehicles and are the drivers' first-line supervisors.

Field Trains Organization

The battalion field trains operate in the brigade support area (BSA) under the supervision of the headquarters and headquarters company (HHC) executive officer (XO). In mechanized units, the HHC commander supervises the field trains, but we find that the system is more effective with the HHC XO in the field trains while the HHC commander oper-

ates at the tactical operations center (TOC), where he can supervise TOC security, select weapon sites, and perform many other tasks that require his expertise and authority (including helping the S-3 manage special combat platoon assets). Since the HHC XO is also the battalion maintenance officer, he can be more effective in the field trains.

The HHC first sergeant assists the XO in supervising the field trains. He is responsible for security and for the NCO supervision of all the battalion sections and personnel located there. Using all available manpower, he organizes the cooks, kitchen police (KP), drivers, clerks, armorers, and others to perform this important, yet often overlooked, security mission. He ensures that fighting positions are located and dug correctly, that range cards are prepared, obstacles are emplaced, and that guard and reaction forces are established and rehearsed. He coordinates these tasks with the forward support battalion (FSB).

We recommend that a team consisting of mess personnel be identified for each fighting position. This pairing ensures that the critical information regarding security is disseminated by the cooks at each position. The KPs should be rotated periodically from the rifle companies. Placing soldiers with profiles on KP may not be the best solution because of their various limitations, but sometimes it may be the only solution.

The battalion S-4 NCO in charge (NCOIC) and the S-1 personnel services NCO (PSNCO) set up and operate the field trains command post (CP). They operate on the A&L net, using their clerks for radio watch. They track all supply requests sent back from the companies. They monitor this net and pass information to the support platoon leader and the company supply sergeants.

The battle roster of the field trains includes those previously mentioned as well as the company supply sergeants and armorers, the battalion mechanics, and a communication platoon soldier.

Combat Trains Organization

The combat trains area is the heart of the battalion CSS operation. The battalion XO is normally found here. He can go forward to take charge of the TOC as the commander requires, but should plan to spend much of his time overseeing CSS from the combat trains CP.

The battalion S-4, assisted by the S-1, is in charge of the combat trains. Together, they set up and operate the trains CP, monitoring the battalion command net as well as performing as the net control station (NCS) of the battalion A&L net. The S-4 plans the battalion's logistical support. He prepares a CSS overlay that shows main supply routes (MSRs), proposed logistic release point (LRP) sites, barrier supply points, casualty collection points (CCPs), and the like.

The battalion aid station (BAS) is found in the combat trains. Its mission of casualty evacuation and treatment is critical. Since the BAS has only four front-line ambulances, some high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles (HMMWVs) from the combat trains might be used to augment them. Additionally, since medics are in short supply, we recommend that in combat the medic drivers be replaced and allowed to go forward on the HMMWVs. Virtually any soldier can drive, but few can perform adequately as medics. The platoon's best medic should be put in charge of triage at the BAS, while the others help him and the physician's assistant. Other medics, of course, are forward with rifle companies.

Movement from the combat trains forward is controlled by the support platoon sergeant. All routes to and from forward CCPs must be rehearsed and clearly understood by all members of the combat trains. In addition, all routes to the medical company location in the field trains must be rehearsed. Again, security is required for any vehicles moving forward from the combat trains, and units must plan and practice the same security measures as for the field trains.

The chaplain locates in the combat trains and must be accessible to the battalion aid station and units to assist those in spiritual need.

The support platoon has many roles in the combat trains. Of the six HMMWVs located there, one is at the disposal of the battalion XO, and we recommend that the mobile subscriber equipment (MSE) be installed on this vehicle. The other five HMMWVs come under the control of the support platoon sergeant. All six vehicles carry emergency Class I (food) and water to support the line units. Class V (ammunition) resupply to the companies also comes from the combat trains. Vehicles in the trains are also used to get a company commander to an operations order briefing or for use in leader reconnaissances. They are requested over the A&L net. Commanders must understand that the vehicles belong to the combat trains and not to the company commander and that they must always return as quickly as possible to the trains.

The selection of a site for the combat trains is crucial to success. The site must allow for good vehicle trafficability and should be near an open area that can be used as a PZ. The unit should have the bean-bag lights, chemlites, and smoke grenades needed to operate a PZ. This capability is

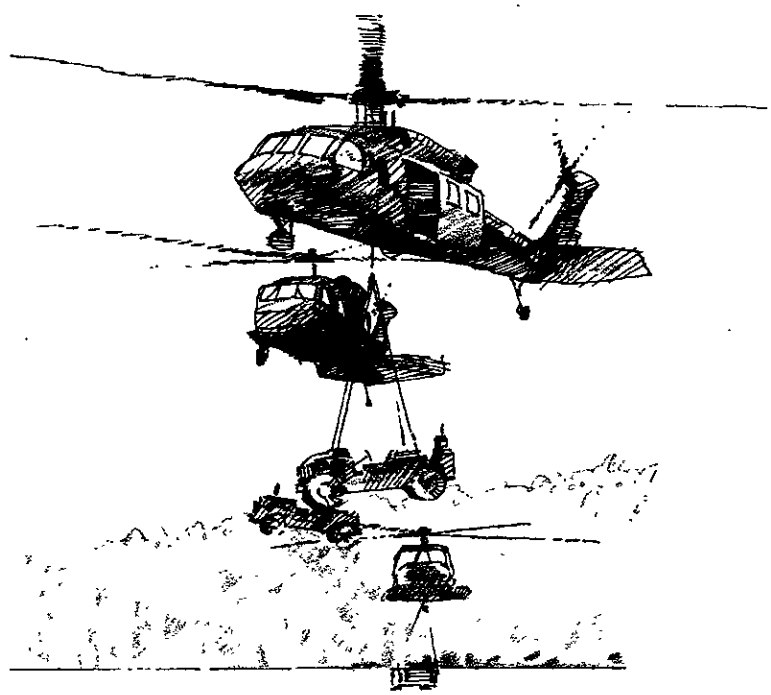
LOCATION OF SUPPORT PLATOON VEHICLES

FIELD TRAINS

1 HMMWV	S-1/S-4 NCOIC
1 HMMWV	Ammunition Section NCOIC
1 HMMWV	HHC Supply Sergeant
1 HMMWV	Support Platoon Leader
3 HMMWVs	Rifle Company Supply Sergeants
2 5-ton Trucks	For moving the MKT and water buffalo
6 1 1/2-ton Trailers	For ammunition, POL, rifle companies, S-1/S-4

COMBAT TRAINS

1 HMMWV	Battalion XO
5 HMMWVs	Combat Trains NCOIC
2 1 1/2-ton Trailers	For ammunition and POL



critical for aerial medical evacuation and resupply operations. *We strongly recommend sending the support platoon sergeant to Pathfinder School.*

The vehicles operating from the combat trains should always move as part of a convoy, secured by an antiarmor section. Lone vehicles are easy targets for enemy infiltrators, especially in low intensity conflicts. The Army would do well to augment a light infantry battalion with a section of HMMWVs that have MK-19s mounted on them, another requirement that will call for an MTOE change.

Finally, the combat trains CP must track the battle and be prepared to serve as the alternate TOC when required.

LOGPAC Operations

The field trains' most important mission is the LOGPAC operation. LOGPACs are sent forward when the S-4 designates a place and time for the LRP. The combat trains CP calls the field trains CP and notifies the support platoon leader. He designates a start point (SP) time of departure from the field trains which will ensure that the LOGPAC arrives at the LRP on time. The cooks are given a pick-up time for food and ensure that it is ready on time.

The supply sergeants now enter the picture. They report first to the field trains CP to get the latest supply requests from their companies. Then they check with the S-1 PSNCO and pick up any personnel replacements or mail to go forward to their companies. The supply sergeant next checks with the communications repairman on equipment that has been either repaired or floated from the FSB contact team. The armorer checks with the POL trailer for weapon cleaning products if he needs them. Finally, they stop at the mess team and pick up Class I supplies.

Class I is broken down by platoon. Platoon breaks are much more tactically sound, since light infantry should operate in mutually supporting platoon patrol bases, coming together as a company only when the mission dictates. Initially, the S-4 passes the strength figures for each platoon to the cooks, and the supply sergeant updates these numbers daily.

The supply sergeant checks each of his ration breaks to make sure the proper amount of Class I is present. When issuing T-rations to a platoon of 30, for example, two tray packets of 18 rations are issued. Although the troops receive extra rations, this is the cost of doing business with T-rations. If a hot A-ration meal is requested, it is broken down in the mermites (insulated containers) by platoon. This does not require a lot of extra mermites. One with three separate inserts can usually handle the average break. The only problem with breaks by platoon is a lack of serving utensils. If enough are issued for each platoon, they quickly disappear, ending up in trash bags and being inadvertently thrown out. The answer is to have the supply sergeant buy these utensils and account for them.

The company armorer, with his tool kit, accompanies each LOGPAC so he can repair weapons as far forward as possible. He takes any damaged weapons that he cannot repair to the small arms contact team in the FSB, where they are repaired or a float is issued. The weapons return on the next LOGPAC.

The support platoon leader then organizes the vehicles into a convoy with security front and rear. He gets all the drivers and track commanders together and gives them a final update briefing. The vehicles move out tactically—sandbagged for protection from mines, covers removed from cargo HMMWVs to allow passengers to fire from the vehicle, or to dismount rapidly if necessary. This convoy is

secured by any of several means, normally the antiarmor section vehicles. MPs are ideal for this mission, when they are available.

When the supply vehicles reach the LRP, they move forward to support their units, and the security element secures the LRP. If the enemy situation warrants it, the units must send security elements to pick up their LOGPACs. The supply sergeants have two hours to resupply their companies and return to the LRP.

When a supply sergeant gets to his company, he links up with the first sergeant, who gives him a hard copy of the company's supply requests. The supply sergeant returns the previous hard copy showing the requests that were filled and those that could not be filled. He drops the headquarters element's breakdown of supplies and moves out at once to find the platoons. He links up with each platoon in turn and drops personnel, food, water, mail, radios, and the like, quickly moving from unit to unit. By the time he returns to the headquarters element's location, its soldiers should have finished the meal and have everything ready for him to pick up. He then completes his rounds to the platoons. It is not necessary for a platoon to wait for him to return. The soldiers can simply put all of the residue in bags and set them by the side of the road. The supply sergeant then returns to the LRP; once all the vehicles are in, the convoy returns to the field trains.

Two of the HMMWVs in the field trains merit special consideration. One is dedicated to the HHC supply sergeant, and the other is to the support platoon leader. The first is used to support the mortar platoon, the scout platoon (if appropriate), the TOC, and the antiarmor section. The other vehicle supports the combat trains and brings forward a trailer loaded with fuel cans. On return, the driver takes the other trailer with the empty fuel cans. On the next LOGPAC run, the vehicle comes forward with a trailer containing Class V supplies and returns the one with the residue. This system ensures that food, fuel, and ammunition are never mixed on the same vehicle. All vehicles must carry plenty of extra water cans and exchange them for empty cans in the combat trains. The combat trains must always have plenty of water to support the companies in an emergency.

The supply sergeants return to the field trains and make their rounds in reverse. Serving utensils are taken to the KPs, washed, and returned immediately. Water cans are refilled. Trash is unloaded. Mess equipment is returned to the KPs. Personnel and mail are dropped off at the S-1. Communications equipment is hand-receipted to the communications repairman. Supply requests are dropped off with the S-4 NCO in charge. Finally, the HHC XO conducts a meeting in which to disseminate information concerning the next LOGPAC.

CSS in the Defense

The mechanized infantry units at the NTC are capable of digging elaborate fighting positions. At the JRTC, however, when light infantry units in the defense are attacked by the mechanized opposing force, many of them have difficulty conducting defensive operations against an armored or motorized opponent. A lack of armor, or a lack of antiarmor capability, may be the primary reason for this weakness. But light infantry rifle platoons occupying defensive positions also need readily available pioneer tools to use in preparing defensive positions.

Normally, light infantrymen carry only the standard issue entrenching tool (E-tool), which is capable of performing only light digging chores. The old model wooden handled

E-tool was much more capable. We strongly recommend that the Army find a more suitable multipurpose infantry tool, or start issuing the old model E-tool again.

Another problem in light infantry units is dependence on the small emplacement excavators (SEEs). Instead of waiting for a SEE that may never come, units must develop a sense of urgency and self-reliance in preparing their defenses. We recommend that each company supply sergeant have a trailer loaded with a defense kit in the field trains. Upon receipt of a defensive mission, the trailer would be brought forward on the LOGPAC. The following items should be carried on the trailer: Two D-handle shovels, two picks, and one axe per rifle squad; and a footlocker loaded with communications wire (DR-8), the TA 312 and TA-1 telephones, and a platoon early warning system (PEWS) for each rifle platoon and the headquarters element. Too many light infantry units at the JRTC fail to use company communication hot-loops in the defense, but this can easily be corrected by having the company communication sergeant forward.

Finally, the trailer should contain 3,000 or 4,000 sandbags and enough picket pounders to allow each platoon to work at the same time. These items will suffice until the push package of Class IV (construction and barrier materials)—pickets, 4x4s, plywood, concertina wire, and the like—arrives. The HHC XO should ensure that the Class IV supplies are coordinated with the FSB and that the combat trains can move the Class IV from the barrier supply point to the line companies.

Company XO and First Sergeant Roles in CSS

The company XO should not be in the combat trains. He should be forward with his company serving as a fighting XO. Along with his first sergeant, he moves his company and prepares for the next mission (based on the warning order) until the company commander returns with the operations order. The first sergeant operates the A&L net. One method is to have the XO stay up on the battalion net, while the commander fights the three platoons. The first sergeant co-locates with the company CP and executes all CSS operations. The XO may plan CSS operations, but the first sergeant is the key person to execute them.

During peacetime training, the first sergeant is the senior trainer and trusted advisor. During sustained combat operations, however, he receives the ammunition, casualties, and equipment (ACE) reports, runs the company casualty collection point, and cross-levels ammunition and equipment within the unit. We fully understand that this proposal will meet with a certain amount of opposition from the light infantry community. But mechanized infantry units have long recognized the first sergeant's role in CSS and have reflected this in their doctrine. A careful review of their operating procedures in action will support the validity of this approach.

Essentially, then, the company XO handles all aspects of CSS that are external to the company, while the first sergeant handles internal CSS.

We shudder to think how many young lieutenants have served as XOs in light infantry units and spent all their time in the combat trains. Not only have they learned the wrong lessons about CSS operations, but they have also missed numerous opportunities to be up front learning how to fight a company.

We offer this article, not as the final word on light infantry CSS operations, but as a proposal for which INFANTRY readers will serve as the sounding board. There is still a considerable amount of practical experience to be gained from lessons learned in the past, present, and future combat operations,and JRTC and NTC rotations.

CSS deserves the immediate attention of all leaders. Doctrinal changes in such manuals as Field Manual 7-8 have corrected some weaknesses and ambiguities and have also addressed previous omissions. The roles of key leaders in combat situations—such as the rifle company XO and first sergeant—should be well defined, rehearsed, and easily understood, even by the most inexperienced and recently assigned leader.

The leaders of the light infantry community, working together, can and will correct CSS shortcomings. In the future, light infantry commanders will lead units into combat and be assigned a variety of missions. These commanders must accomplish their missions through ingenuity, intelligence, and continual improvement in the way those missions are supported.

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